

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Processing Of Child Support Payments Disrupted Following Malfunction Of System; D.O.J. Working 'Feverishly' To Restore

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The V.I. Department of Justice announced Tuesday that the Paternity and Child Support Division (PCSD) is currently experiencing a temporary breakdown with its Child Support Territorial Automated Reporting System (CSTARS). According to a release issued by V.I. D.O.J. Public Media Officer, Corliss Smithen, as a result of the malfunction in the system, some of PCSD's services, such as the timely processing of the monthly child support payments, have been disrupted.

According to MIS Manager Christian Frorup, Jr., the system collapsed on June 30 due to a batch processing failure. CSTARS, the automated case management system that supports the Title IV-D child support program in the U.S. Virgin Islands, has been operational since 2001. However, after years of being without a modernization contract and updates, the system fell into a state of non-compliance with a number of child support systems requirements, D.O.J. said.

“The child support system does a batch process app, so every time one enters information, at the end of the night, we have to run a batch process app to process all the payments,” Mr. Frorup explained. “During this end-of-month process, there’s a particular process, but there’s a particular script for end of month that failed and this script actually does the end-of-month financials for the month and then moves the balances over to the next month. Since that process failed, we can’t move forward until this process completes successfully because it’s very important for moving balances forward.”

The PCSD is working feverishly to address the issue and Frorup expects to have the system restored shortly.

“We’re expecting to have the problem resolved by the end of the week,” he said. “We’re working on the process right now. We’re on the phone with our previous consultant that used to work with us and we’re trying to get that resolved and the batch operators are actually talking to our consultant to work out the process.”

Mr. Frorup added, “We can accept some payments in the form of paperwork because the system is down. If anyone wants to make a payment, he or she can write it on paper, we accept the money, give the person a receipt and when the system comes back up, the Collections Unit has to enter all of those payments into the system according to the cases. Those payments will be recorded when the system is up.”

In addition to delayed child support payments, the temporary loss of CSTARS also affects payroll processing.

“We have these processes we have to do and if this is not done properly at the end of the month, then it is going to create a problem going forward and then we will have to revert to solve that problem before we can go forward again,” Mr. Frorup said.

Recently, PCSD signed a new contract with ProTech Solutions, Inc. – a nationwide information technology services provider for development, maintenance, and enhancement of automated systems – to manage PCSD’s CSTARS application.

“ProTech did say they are going to provide interim support while doing the CSTARS modernization, so if we’re not able to resolve this problem on our own, we will engage with them as soon as possible to try and get this resolved,” Mr. Frorup said.

Being cognizant of the difficulties some families may be experiencing because of CSTARS’ failure, Attorney General Denise N. George extended her concerns and thanked the PCSD clients for their patience and cooperation while the PCSD staff continues to work assiduously to restore the system, according to the release.